

Message Text

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SUBJ: BUSINESS WEEK INTERVIEW WITH RENE LEVESQUE

1. LOCAL PRESS HAS CARRIED EXCERPTS OF INTERVIEW WHICH RENE LEVESQUE GAVE TO BUSINESS WEEK MAGAZINE LAST WEEK. AS INTERVIEW HAS NOT YET BEEN PUBLISHED IN BUSINESS WEEK, SUMMARY OF MOST IMPORTANT REMARKS MADE BY LEVESQUE, AS THEY APPEARED IN LOCAL PRESS, FOLLOWS:

2. PREMIER LEVESQUE SAID IN INTERVIEW THAT WHEN QUEBEC BECOMES INDEPENDENT - "AND I SAY WHEN, NOT IF" - IT WILL NOT SEEK TO GAIN CONTROL OF ALL INDUSTRIES, BUT ONLY SELECT ONES SUCH AS BANKING AND ASBESTOS AND THOSE DEALING WITH CULTURE.

3. CALLING HIMSELF "A MODERATE SOCIALIST", AND STRESSING THAT QUEBEC AS A NATION WOULD FOLLOW A MIXED ECONOMY FORMAT, SUCH AS SWEDEN'S, LEVESQUE SAID THAT ATTAINMENT OF QUEBEC SOVEREIGNTY WOULD MEAN THAT QUEBEC'S TAX BASE STAYS HOME AND THAT REST OF OF CANADA WOULD FIND OUT THAT QUEBEC WAS NOT "THE KEPT WOMAN" OF CANADA. LEVESQUE ADDED THAT "WE DON'T WANT TO RAMPAGE ALL OVER THE PLACE. WE ARE NOT A STATE-OWNERSHIP PARTY. WE ARE A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY THAT IS COMPARABLE TO THE SCANDINAVIAN EXPERIENCE."

4. WHEN ASKED WHAT INDUSTRIES MIGHT BE PLACED UNDER QUEBEC CONTROL, LEVESQUE REPLIED THAT THIS INCLUDED EVERYTHING THAT HAS UNCLASSIFIED

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TO DO ECONOMICALLY WITH CULTURE - PUBLICATIONS, MEDIA, TV,

FILMS. WHETHER IT IS PUBLIC, PRIVATE, OR MIXED, THESE BASIC SECTORS, LEVESQUE SAID, SHOULD BE UNDER HOME OWNERSHIP. LEVESQUE ALSO MENTIONED "OTHER SECTORS INCLUDING BASIC FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS", WITHOUT BEING MORE SPECIFIC. HE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED THE ASBESTOS INDUSTRY, HOWEVER, AND SAID THAT AS SOON AS QUEBEC CAN AFFORD IT, IT WANTS HOME CONTROL OF THE ASBESTOS INDUSTRY, NOT NECESSARILY 100 O/O OWNERSHIP, BUT CONTROL. LEVESQUE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD MOVE INTO NO FAULT AUTO INSURANCE, WITH A PUBLIC UNIVERSAL PLAN OF COMPULSORY AUTO INSURANCE AT A PRICE AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO COST.

5. FOR THE PRESENT, LEVESQUE INDICATED THAT HE CONTEMPLATES NO MAJOR CHANGES IN THE PROVINCIAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS FOREIGN INVESTMENT, BUT HE ALSO INDICATED THAT THIS WAS A TEMPORARY CONDITION. HE SAID THAT QUEBEC WAS GOING TO PLAY BY THE FEDERAL RULES OF THE GAME UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE, BUT THAT FOREIGN INVESTORS WERE GOING TO BE TOLD "THE RULES OF THE GAME IN QUEBEC".

6. COMMENT: CONSULATE HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN TEXT OF BUSINESS WEEK INTERVIEW, WHICH WE ASSUME WILL APPEAR PUBLICLY IN NEXT WEEK OR TWO. CG CALLED CLAUDE RYAN OF LE DEVOIR TO ASK IF HE KNEW WHAT LEVESQUE HAD IN MIND WHEN HE MENTIONED HOME CONTROL OF PUBLICATIONS, MEDIA, AND TV. RYAN SAID THAT HE HAD NOT YET SEEN TEXT OF BUSINESS WEEK ARTICLE AND WOULD PREFER TO WITHHOLD PUBLIC COMMENT IN HIS NEWSPAPER ON REPORTED LEVESQUE STATEMENTS UNTIL HE HAD OPPORTUNITY TO READ COMPLETE ARTICLE. HE ADDED THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT LEVESQUE WAS SILLY ENOUGH TO COMTEMPLEATE "PUBLIC CONTROL" OF MEDIA, BUT THAT HE WISHED TO SEE EXACT TEXT BEFORE MAKING ANY FURTHER COMMENTS.

7. THE TONE OF LEVESQUE'S COMMENTS, AS REPORTED IN PRESS, APPEAR TO STRIKE SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT TONE THAN COMMENTS THAT MINISTER OF INDUSTRY RODRIGUE TREMBLAY HAS BEEN MAKING. TREMBLAY, ANXIOUS TO REJUVENATE QUEBEC'S SAGGING ECONOMY, HAS PREFERRED TO MINIMIZE NATIONALIZATION THREAT TO GREATER EXTENT THAN HAS LEVESQUE. IN HIS MOST RECENT INTERVIEW IN NEW YORK TIMES OF DECEMBER 10, TREMBLAY SAID THAT PQ WAS ONLY MILDLY SOCIALISTIC, THAT IT WAS NOT IN FAVOR OF LARGE-SCALE NATIONALIZATION BECAUSE PARTY WAS AGAINST LARGE BUREAUCRACIES, AND THAT PQ WAS MOVING TOWARD UNCLASSIFIED

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CENTER BECAUSE THAT WAS ONLY WAY TO KEEP POWER AND GET REF-ERENDUM THROUGH. TREMBLAY SAID THAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR INVESTMENT IN HIGH-TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY WHICH IS MORE CAPITAL INTENSIVE, SUCH AS ELECTRONICS.
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